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SPECIAL REPORT

THE SUCCESSION PROBLEM IN FRANCE

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
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De Gaulle's speedy recovery from his prostate operation in April makes it more likely than ever that he will seek another term as president of France. Moreover, he may show greater interest than before in taking legal steps to guarantee the succession to a man of his own choice. Speculation on his successor has centered increasingly on Premier Georges Pompidou, although De Gaulle has long had a sympathetic attitude toward Henri d'Orleans, Count of Paris, the pretender to the French throne. If De Gaulle were to decide not to run again, Pompidou is the more likely choice to face the electorate in his own right.

De Gaulle's Plans

De Gaulle recently told his cabinet that, if health permits, he would seek re-election at the end of his present term in 1965. He will probably make a final decision to run again only if he thinks he will be able to serve a substantial part of the new term.

If this is his decision, De Gaulle may wish to sponsor new provisions in the constitution which would enable him to ensure that the man he wants takes over if he himself were to die or be incapacitated during his term of office. Under present law the president of the Senate, Gaston Monnerville, would succeed on an interim basis and be required to hold a presidential election within 35 days. Despite his dislike for Monnerville, De Gaulle's reluctance to consider the succession problem has prevented any move to change the present system.

Now, however, De Gaulle might be ready to propose a widely discussed constitutional amendment making the premier the immediate successor if the president dies or resigns. Such an amendment could be made by referendum in 1965 and would have the effect of reserving the premiership for De Gaulle's chosen heir.

The Count of Paris

If De Gaulle is actually grooming the present premier as his successor, there is strong reason to believe that Pompidou is his second choice, after the Count of Paris. De Gaulle and the pretender have a striking similarity of views and outlook. In particular the count is favored in De Gaulle's eyes by his aloofness from the "old parties." Like De Gaulle, moreover, the count believes in the importance of "national legitimacy" and feels that institutions count for more than personalities.

The 56-year-old pretender is a direct descendant of Louis Philippe, France's last reigning king (1830-1848). Until 1950, when claimants to the French throne were allowed to return to France, he spent most of his time in Belgium, Portugal, and Morocco. During World War II Henri apparently approached both Marshal Petain and De Gaulle in an effort to win recognition as head of the French Government. After the war, he made a brief effort to organize the French monarchists but broke with them when they opposed his relatively liberal ideas.

Since his return to France, the count has not actively engaged in politics, but he has been a frequent commentator on French policy. His views on many aspects of national and international policy seem to parallel closely those of De Gaulle. In 1953 and 1954, for example, he opposed the European Defense Community on the grounds that the treaty would entail the loss of French sovereignty. He also has criticized the US on several occasions for putting undue pressure on France. The major theme of the monthly political bulletins which the count publishes in Paris is usually the need for French unity and a stable government.

In his other writings the count has stressed the importance of solving social problems in France, attacked all forms of totalitarianism and racism, and insisted that in France the republican form of government has failed to achieve the objectives of social democracy. In the past, he has asserted that the aim of monarchy is "to express the will of the common people" and has called for the reintegration of the French working class into the nation.

The count has carefully maintained good relations in all political circles, especially with the trade unions. He is convinced that the historical political parties in France have no public appeal and therefore feels that the successor to De Gaulle, like De Gaulle himself, must be above the parties and independent of them. The count thinks that the president of France should be an arbitrator, a role he considers admirably suited to his talents.

The count's acceptability to the French people might suffer from his status as pretender to the throne. What would militate most against him if he ran for election as president--or moved into the office in some other fashion--would be the example of Napoleon III. Napoleon, who also posed as a champion of social justice and the proletariat, was elected president of the Second Republic in 1848 but made himself emperor in 1851 by a coup d'etat. Many Frenchmen would probably fear that if the pretender became

chief of state the next step would be a return to the monarchy.

There is no bar in law to the count's accession to the presidency. The constitution of the Fifth Republic is the first republican constitution since the Revolution of 1789 to omit a ban on the presidential candidacies of members of former reigning families of France. Shortly before De Gaulle returned to power in 1958, he wired the count, on the occasion of the marriage of one of the pretender's sons, saying that "your future, that of Prince Henri, that of your kin, are integrated with the hopes of France." Several weeks before his recent operation, De Gaulle reportedly promised to "name the count as his successor" if he were subsequently unable to continue in public office.

However, what seems to be a well-documented case of personal admiration and ideological support does not assure that De Gaulle, as an astute practical politician, would risk backing the count in a national popular election. Such a candidacy could hardly expect the enthusiastic support of even the Gaullist Union for the New Republic (UNR), and certainly the other parties would be opposed.

Premier Pompidou

Georges Pompidou, a scholarly ex-banker, now 53 years old, has been a Gaullist since 1944 and was a close associate of De Gaulle during the latter's period of retirement before 1958. Pompidou is a graduate of the prestigious Ecole Normale Superieure as well as the Ecole des Sciences Politiques. He began his career as a teacher but in 1944 became a special assistant in General de Gaulle's cabinet. Although he left that position in 1946, he was probably De Gaulle's closest adviser and counselor for the next seven or eight years.

In 1954 Pompidou became director general of the House of Rothschild, which provided experience for his later service as one of De Gaulle's expert advisers on business and administrative problems. From June 1958 Pompidou served as De Gaulle's cabinet director until the general became president. Although Pompidou returned to the business world, De Gaulle called upon him to perform the delicate function of "undercover" man in the preliminary Franco-Algerian exchanges which led to the Evian Conference. Pompidou was picked for this job as a man who could talk, explain, and listen without losing patience or laying himself open to deceptive maneuvers.

Pompidou's public pronouncements faithfully reflect the Gaullist line. He supports De Gaulle's concept of European political integration, shares his antipathy toward international organizations, justifies the nuclear strike force as less

expensive than increased conventional forces, and says he will never countenance the return to "assembly government." In commenting on the government's stabilization program last year during an interview with Paris-Match, Pompidou remarked in true Gaullist fashion: "I do not think that the objective of this regime and De Gaulle's action is to bring prosperity to Frenchmen. The first objective, in my opinion, is to return their dignity to them."

Pompidou is rumored to be one of the few insiders who is permitted to dispute De Gaulle's views, but there is no record of instances in which Pompidou has acted as a moderating influence. In 1958, he asserted that an "independent premier" could emerge "only after the major problems of France have been solved." "At that time," he said, "the government could become either a right-center or a left-center one." Since his accession to the premiership Pompidou has made no further comments on the future role of that office.

Although derided by his opponents as a "technician," Pompidou showed his ability as an administrator and majority leader during De Gaulle's recent illness. Subsequently he undertook a brief tour of the provinces of central France, reportedly at De Gaulle's insistence, to let himself be known to the people. Judging from the popular reception, the tour, the first of its kind undertaken by a French premier, was a success and strengthened the impression that he is being groomed as De Gaulle's political heir. In a recent public opinion poll, Pompidou outstripped Socialist Gaston Defferre for the first time as a candidate for the succession. Defferre is the principal candidate put forth by the opposition to face De Gaulle in the next election.

Transition to Pompidou

Pompidou's major liability appears to be his lack of a political base. This could probably be overcome if De Gaulle singled him out as his choice for UNR nomination and personally took active steps to encourage his election.

A surer way for Pompidou to succeed De Gaulle would be open if the proposed constitutional amendment were put through placing the premier in succession to the president. In this case, De Gaulle might serve part of a new term and withdraw, possibly on grounds of ill health, leaving Pompidou to complete the term or, depending on the provisions of the amendment, to

serve as interim president until new elections could be held. If the term could be served out by the immediate successor, the detrimental effect on governmental stability might not be as great, but he would not have the public endorsement De Gaulle holds so necessary.

This problem could be overcome if new elections were called for after about a month, and the incumbent would have a considerable advantage in going before the electorate in the capacity of acting president. (SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEM)

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